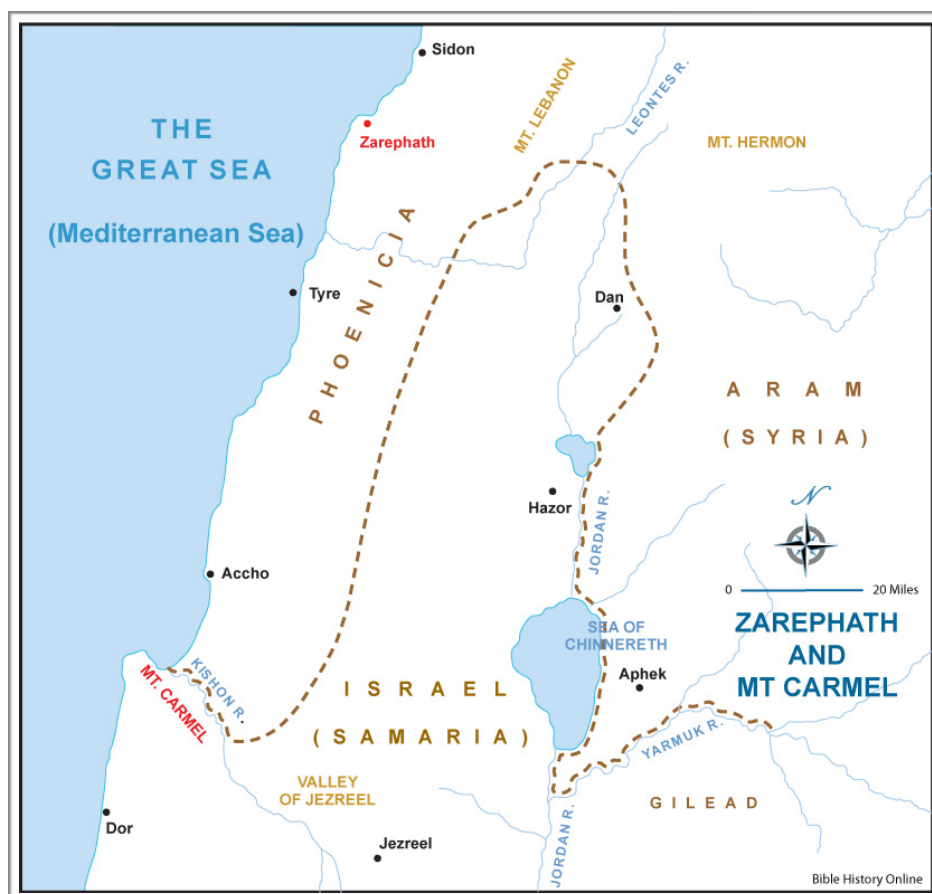

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

Week 3 - 1 Kings 18:1-46





Baal: Baal literally means 'Lord' (direct opposition to the Lordship of Yahweh). Baal was supposed to be the son of El, the chief God (although he was more powerful). He was a fertility God believed to make the earth produce crops and people produce children. He was worshipped in many different ways and took on different forms such as Baal' Zebub whom the Philistines worshipped and where the name Beelzebub originated.

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 - Consequences of breaking the covenant

13 'And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14 then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. 15 And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.' 16 Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, 17 lest the Lord's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.

18:1

"Go, **present** yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth."

present = *hê·rā·'êh* - appear (revelatory)

Obadiah's dilemma - devout believer in Yahweh yet trusted official of Ahab

18:6 - Parting of ways (key theme)

6 So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Joshua 24:14-15

14 "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

How do we witness to Jesus in the presence of particularly intense opposition?
When is it right and wise to be more covert, when do we need to be more overt?
Can you think of examples from your life or the lives of others?

18:15

15 Elijah said, “As the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today.”

LORD Almighty = *Yahweh Sabaoth* - ‘The Lord of Hosts’

present = *e-ra-eh* (see 18:1) appear - unveiling, revealing

Used twice in the whole of scripture, here and in Leviticus 16:2

Leviticus 16:2

2 The Lord said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

e-ra-eh —————

How does Elijah stack the odds against himself?

1. He picks Mt Carmel - ‘enemy territory’, pagan worship site close to Phoenician border (18:19)

2. He outnumbered himself 850 to 1 (18:19)

3. He lets them have first pick of the bulls (18:23)

4. He drenches his bull, the wood and the stones of the altar with 12 large jars of water so that it fills the large trench surrounding it. (18:33-35)

Romans 8:31

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

18:21 (see 18:6)

21 Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you **waver** between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

waver = *po-se-him* - limp, hobble, dance, ‘sit on the fence’

Revelation 3:15-17

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! **16** So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. **17** You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

18:21

Why did the people say nothing?

18:24 - The people want a sign

Are you a spectator or are you living out your faith?

Matthew 16:1

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

2 He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ **3** and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. **4** A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

18:26

...And they **danced** around the altar they had made.

danced = *way·pas·sə·hū* (different conjugation of *po-se-him* - verse 21) - limped etc.

18:27

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or **busy**, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."

Otherwise 'indisposed' - it is thought this is really a hebrew slang term for relieving himself.

18:39 - saved upon a declaration of faith, the covenant is restored.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "**The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!**"

18:40 - the false prophets are killed

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, **2** and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," **3** you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. **4** It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. **5** That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

Questions to consider

Thinking about Obadiah: How do we witness to Jesus in the presence of particularly intense opposition? When is it right and wise to be more covert, when do we need to be more overt? Can you think of examples from your life or the lives of others?

How do we ensure we are not spectators and live out our faith as Elijah did?

How does the contrast between the Baal worshippers and Elijah instruct us in our worship of God?